Requirements Generation On A Fast Track . . .

THE INTERIM BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM/INTERIM ARMORED VEHICLE

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*Author's Note: This article is based on an interview conducted in March 2001 with BG Donald F. Schenk, former Program Manager (PM), Brigade Combat Team (BCT), while he served as the Deputy for Systems Acquisition, U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM). It also incorporates data from the Army Acquisition Lessons Learned Web site and database (**http://www.acquisitionll.leavenworth.army.mil**).*

Introduction

In a speech during the October 1999 meeting of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki announced that we would be moving to a new 21st century Army. Shinseki said we will prioritize solutions that employ smaller, lighter, more lethal, yet more reliable, fuel-efficient, and more survivable options. He was very confident in saying that he believes the Army could go to an all-wheel vehicle fleet where the follow-on to existing armored vehicles could come in at 50- to 70-percent less tonnage.

Flash forward to November 2000 when then Director of the Army Acquisition Corps LTG Paul J. Kern announced a contract award for the Interim Armored Vehicle (IAV)(now called "Stryker") to General Motors/ General Dynamics Land Systems (GM/GDLS) Limited Liability Corp. Measured against history, this contract award for development and initial production of a family of 10 combat vehicles was made in a remarkably short period of time. An intense effort was needed by both combat and materiel developers to define and document a requirement and to award a contract to deliver equipment against that requirement. This article focuses on the development of the requirement for the Interim Brigade Combat Team (IBCT)/IAV and the environment in which this requirement came to fruition.

Communications Effort

To convert Shinseki's transformation comments into a requirement and ultimately a contract for a family of combat systems in only 13 months—and to deliver the first article only 16 months after that—several important concurrent activities had to drive the process. This oftentimes resulted in reversing the relationship of requirements generation and acquisition planning. The combat and materiel developers had to initiate an immediate public communications effort by briefing industry and clearing the "minefields" laid by those who—even today—publicly disagree with the Army vision of what is really needed for 21st century warfighting. An operational requirements document (ORD) had to be written and approved, and an effective and logically seamless (given the constraints of time) working relationship between the combat and materiel developer had to be established.

The public debut of the requirement by the Chief of Staff at the October 1999 AUSA meeting was followed by a *Commerce Business Daily* (CBD) announcement less than 1 month later outlining the initial framework within which the acquisition would proceed. This CBD announcement described the broad intent of the acquisition, the role of Fort Knox, KY, in hosting the market survey, and the focus event of an Industry Day in December 1999. It was issued without a requirement or an ORD supporting it and, therefore, might have been "dead on arrival" in an earlier time. But *this* CBD announcement had support! In fact, it had been vetted through congressional staffers prior to being finalized and guided through the approval process by a general officer. As the PM, BCT noted in March 2001, relative to lack of an articulated requirement, "Everything was on the table except for contracting out the Army."

In December 1999, as with all TACOM procurement contracts, the Army held an advance planning briefing for industry to discuss the requirement. This formal Army interaction with industry on this subject included three presentations. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Systems Manager gave a presentation on the Operational and Organizational Plan; a Fort Knox representative discussed the Platform Performance Demonstration that would be conducted in January 2000 and serve as the market survey; and the PM, BCT described to the extent possible the wide-open nature of the program, answering questions on requirements, schedule, funding, contracting, and support strategies, even though there was little definition at that time.

Although government information on the IBCT/IAV requirement definition was sparse, the media continued commenting on the IBCT/IAV. Because few specifics were addressed, the media began its coverage with a requirements debate that centered on a systems-based discussion of wheels versus tracks, building up the furor created by GEN Shinseki's speech in October. Further, the media took the view that the military was attempting to shift from the capabilities that made it successful during the Gulf War and moving toward "thin-skinned" vehicles that would endanger America's soldiers because of reduced vehicle armor protection. Unfortunately, because the Army was slow to shape the media's view at the outset, story lines were established early by the press and continued for 14 months, even during the contract decision announcement. In addition, when the contract award was protested, the Army was slow to address the media comments again, thereby allowing the media and the protesting party to set the tone and conditions for debate. In total fairness, the Army could do little else because of not wanting to revert to litigation—it was doing all it could to keep the protest within the formal Government Accounting Office channel. Any public outcry by the Army would necessarily have worked to its

disadvantage should the protest enter federal judiciary litigation.

The ORD

The initial draft Request For Proposal (RFP) was released in December 1999 without benefit of anything like an ORD. Because of schedule constraints, only a draft ORD was available when the system specifications and second draft RFP were prepared in February 2000. While the PM, BCT continued communications with industry in such forums as the annual AUSA meeting, and while the rest of the Army drew support, long and intense hours were spent developing the ORD. Elements of the ORD were developed at TRADOC schools, and the ORD was consolidated at TRADOC Headquarters. A significant step in the ORD's development was a 3-day general officer review at Fort Monroe, VA, at the end of January 2000.

The ORD was developed with only the necessary, relevant criteria to ensure the Army was provided the capability identified by the warfighter. Never before had such intense effort gone into deliberately linking the Operational and Organizational Plan to the ORD. The resulting document was one that was intended to produce a platform-enabled soldier, not a soldier using a platform.

The final ORD contained only five key performance parameters (KPPs) because the Army did not want to be overwhelmed by a large number of parameters against which a multiple vehicle system proposal would be evaluated. The limited number of KPPs prompted varying reactions. There were those who argued that because of the multiple variants of the basic system, the source selection process would be overwhelmed by the number of criteria needing to be tracked. Others adamantly insisted that the small number of KPPs did not allow for sufficient evaluation board flexibility as well as a distinction between proposals. All of this had to be balanced against a non-KPP requirement that commonality was more important than individual platform performance because of the need to deliberately address supportability at the same level as performance, schedule, and cost.

The accelerated program schedule that required the quick drafting of the ORD also resulted in quick development of system specifications. This expedited process could have resulted in differences in interpretation of specifications had it not been for multiple, line-by-line reviews by the PM, BCT; the TRADOC Systems Manager; and senior requirements and acquisition leaders.

Questions were still raised regarding what was being acquired and what was the philosophical purpose behind the acquisition. Despite any perceived controversy over its purpose, the ORD affirmed the focus of the PM, BCT and the acquisition itself, that of providing warfighting capability to a new organization.

"No Air Gap"

Of huge significance to the entire BCT effort was the continuing opportunity for materiel developer (the PM) involvement when the requirement documents were prepared. The PM's presence allowed for questions and responses related to such issues as testing criteria and government-furnished equipment integration. The opportunity to be present paid huge dividends for the PM and the program. Unlike most past experiences in recent memory, this acquisition broke new ground in combat and materiel developer collaboration.

Although the critical importance of the relationship between the PM and the combat developer is apparent now, the TACOM Commanding General made this close relationship an explicit requirement for the PM. Besides "casting a wide net" in pursuit of solutions to the requirement, the PM was to allow "no air gap" between himself and TRADOC. Given the short window of time that the PM had, it was absolutely essential that those responsible for developing the ORD and those managing the acquisition were actively and continuously linked. The connectivity obviously impressed those observing the fluidity of the combat and materiel developer interaction because they commented that they appeared to be "joined at the hip."

Conclusion

This program will not be the last one "fast-tracked." To provide systems to the warfighter that meet known or unstated requirements in a reasonable timeframe (as with the IBCT/IAV), the acquisition community must be expeditious.

Although the BCT Program Management Office communicated openly with potential contractors up through contract award, it was limited by the lack of information it had to pass on to industry, especially at the outset of the program. PM, BCT made up for this by asking industry to provide its good ideas and comments. In that regard, PM, BCT was literally building a bridge to the future while walking on it! Unfortunately, in the eyes of many, the absence of a concerted campaign telling the Army's story about the role of the IBCT or the significance of the IAV as the principal equipment component of these new formations so integral to Army transformation negatively influenced the government-media relationship and the published articles. It is important that each program office work with other program stakeholders as well as the media in shaping the message that it wants delivered. To secure the required resources, each program office must shape Army opinion about its program and the system to be delivered.

The success of the early efforts of the IBCT/IAV combat and materiel development was first realized in a contract award to procure equipment. This success was clearly linked to the inseparable, purposeful actions of the combat and materiel developers and the professionalism of the Army acquisition workforce within each Army Materiel Command buying activity; research, development and engineering center; the Army Test and Evaluation Command; and the legal office that supported the acquisition. These key activities are directly responsible for these first steps in the Army transformation.

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